“KNIGHT RIDES AGAIN”

by Robb Witmer — robbwitmer.info

My name is Michael Knight and I get a lot of compliments on my hair. I don’t do anything fancy with it, just Pert shampoo and Aqua Net hairspray.

My best friend is my car. A company called Knight Industries gave him to me as part of their program called the Foundation for Law and Government.

I know what you’re thinking, but I’m not actually related to Wilton Knight, who started the company. Knight isn’t even my real last name.

My car’s name is KITT, which stands for Knight Industries Two Thousand. Nobody ever told me what “two thousand” has to do with anything. I think they just called him that so it was easy to say.

KITT is the best car in the world, and it’s probably not even close. First of all, he’s fast. And not like *car* fast, but more like a rocket with wheels. Except a rocket can’t handle sharp turns, or weave itself through traffic, which KITT can do at 200 miles per hour. He can’t technically fly, but he can vault himself over things twenty feet tall. I’m not sure how it works, but it sure is fun. The button I push to jump over things is called “Turbo Boost,” which is also the button to go extra fast.

One of the best parts about KITT is that he can talk. He uses a man voice, which is why I refer to him that way, though I’m pretty sure he doesn’t have genitals. He’s also the smartest person I’ve ever met.

Instead of a brain, he’s powered by a computer, which is a bunch of switches, wires, and flashing lights that sit in a box next to the engine. It gives him something called “artificial intelligence,” which means he knows almost everything, way more than a regular person could.

Me and KITT aren’t just friends, though. We’ve been working together for four years as partners at the Foundation, which Mr. Knight

started to “intervene when direct action might provide the only solution,” which is just a fancy way of saying that regular law enforcement sometimes can’t arrest somebody if they’re too rich and powerful. So the Foundation sends us, because we’re a secret organization that answers to nobody, and the laws don’t apply to us either.

We get sent on adventures, usually about one per week, traveling from town to town to fight the bad guys that police can’t. The reason everything we do is secret is because it’s actually illegal to fight bad guys when you aren’t the cops.

I should know, I used to be a police officer. But then I was gunned down on my last job, working undercover for the LAPD, investigating a case of industrial espionage in Las Vegas. When my cover was blown, one of the bad guys, who was a lady named Tanya Walker, shot me in the face and left me for dead. It was a really bad night.

Next thing I know, I wake up in a hospital bed, except I wasn’t in a hospital.

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I don’t know how Mr. Knight made all of his money, I just know he had a lot of it. I visited Knight Industries a few times over the years, but I was so focused on my missions that I forgot to ask what business we were in.

Mr. Knight’s estate was in the mountains at least an hour outside of Los Angeles. There were boats, horse stables, and hedge mazes. Even a helipad for when Mr. Knight wanted to get somewhere fast. The main house he lived was like a castle, with servants, and cooks, and landscapers.

The room I woke up in was inside one of the side houses, which was also really nice, except instead of butlers and maids, it had a team of nurses, doctors, and x-ray machines.

They said that Mr. Knight kept the medical staff on his property so he wouldn't have to leave his property to go to the doctor when he gets sick. It's a good idea, especially if you're really old and rich like Mr. Knight was. He also liked to be on the safe side, which is why the side house had at least six rooms with hospital beds in them.

I was in a coma for a week while the surgeons rebuilt my face and saved my life, and when I woke up they told me I was dead, which I thought was really weird until the doctors brought Devon in to explain how I was only *legally* dead.

Devon was Mr. Knight's best friend, so he was put in charge of everything when Mr. Knight died, especially the Foundation. He was usually the one who gave me and KITT our missions, so that kinda made him my boss. It's okay though, because he's from England, which means he's really smart.

When I came out of my coma, Devon told me all about how after I was shot, Mr. Knight sent a helicopter team to rescue me and bring me back to his estate so his doctors could do everything in their power to keep me alive.

I have a metal plate in my head from an old injury I got in Vietnam, and when Tanya Walker shot me, the bullet bounced off it and destroyed most of my face. Mr. Knight brought in the world's best plastic surgeons to rebuild it. It's funny though, I guess they didn't have any pictures of what my old face looked like, so they made me look like Mr. Knight when he was my age. They could have found some old family photos, or even just looked at my driver's license, but they must have forgotten.

That also might be why they didn't tell anybody what happened to me, like the police or the government, and why when they picked me up after I was shot, they left behind another dead body that was about my size and also had its face blown off — because they forgot the proper procedures and protocols for when a situation like this happens.

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My old name was Michael Long. There was a funeral for me while I was in a coma. Devon said it was for my own safety, since all the bad guys who wanted to kill me before are still really mad and will definitely keep trying to kill me unless they think I'm already dead.

Having a new identity and face can be really fun, even if it means I can never talk to my old friends or family ever again. Mostly I hang out with KITT, driving from town to town. We meet lots of people on our missions, but usually after a week or two we have to move on the next one, so that doesn't leave a lot of time to make friends, or try to get a girlfriend.

Since "Michael Knight" is a brand new person, I have to lie a lot about who I am, which isn't as bad as it sounds. When I meet pretty girls and they ask me what my job is or where I'm from, I try to be creative about it. If I tell the truth, it will put my life in danger, and maybe theirs, so it doesn't feel like lying. Sometimes I pretend to be something I'm not so we can complete our mission. I can be a stunt driver one week, and a firefighter the next. It's the little things that keep me grounded. Like when I get asked what I use on my hair, which I do all the time, I always tell the truth: Pert and Aqua Net, the basics, because it's not about *what* you use, it's about *how* you use it.

Traveling around the country and solving crimes for the Foundation was the best job I ever had. Being a police officer was okay, as long as I wasn't getting shot in the face, but you can't beat the freedom of the open road that I got working for FLAG. I never even had to report back to an office when it was time to fix KITT or go over plans, because they brought the office to me wherever I was, in the back of an 18-wheeler. Now that's service!

Sometimes on our adventures, things didn't always go as planned.

One time the bad guys got me and KITT in a car chase and then tricked me into driving us over a cliff and into the ocean, which would have killed us both if KITT hadn't been equipped with a flotation system that can briefly turn him into a boat. Another time we got caught inside a weapons factory that exploded before we could escape. Luckily, KITT is stronger than any tank, and we drove away with barely a scratch.

On our last mission, we were on the trail of an evil scientist who was trying to sell a time machine that he invented to the Russians. The plan was to shut down his whole operation, put him in jail, and then give all of his technology to the Foundation so they can do something good with it, like give it to the police or the military. Except when we got there, the scientist shot us with a giant laser, and then all of a sudden KITT and I weren't in 1986 anymore.

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Getting zapped forty years into the future sounds fun, but it's not something I would recommend. First of all, it gave me an awful headache that lasted a whole day. And we had no idea where or when we were, though KITT figured it out pretty quick by driving around and looking at stuff while I took a nap in the back seat.

Another thing that's hard when you travel forward in time but you never really think about is having money to buy stuff, like food or gas or hair products. When I got blasted into 2026, I had about $200 in my pocket. In 1986, that was a lot of money and would usually last about a week before I had to ask Devon for more. But here in the future, that money will barely last me a day, and only if I'm really careful.

Restaurants are weird now, too. Everything is bright and shiny, and really clean. They remind me a lot of the hospital room at the Foundation where I had my face reattached. And even the nice ones make you wait in a

line and order food at a cash register instead of having waitresses and busboys do the work for you. It must be a way to save money, because when I bought a cheeseburger and a Coke, it cost almost thirty dollars. I guess restaurant workers are so well paid in the future that owners have no other choice but to keep staff to a minimum.

When I tried to pay for my lunch, I used the money I had in my pocket, which confused the lady at the counter. At first I thought it was because my money is really old, but she said it's just because she hardly ever sees paper money anymore. I asked how most people pay for food, and she said usually with a credit card or their phones, which are so small now that everybody carries one in their pockets, and how you can wave them in front of a register instead of handing people cash.

I said that her phone looks like a bigger version of my watch, which I use to talk to my car, and she said it sounds like it's a "smart" watch and that I could probably use it to buy lunch. Except no matter how much I waved it around, we couldn't figure out how to make it pay for my cheeseburger.

After talking to KITT about what we should do and how we can get back to 1986, he said the best plan would be to find Knight Industries headquarters. Hopefully Devon still works there, or at least somebody who remembers us and what happened, and they'll probably know how to send us back. My idea was to find the closest time travel laser and run it on Reverse so it will send us backwards, but KITT said that even though a time travel laser existed forty years ago, and you'd think that since then the technology would improve and become widely available, there didn't seem to be any evidence that time travel was a common part of society in the future. Which is basically what everybody at the cheeseburger restaurant told me when I asked about where I could find the closest time travel laser.

The building where Knight Industries used to be wasn't even there

anymore. The whole area was rebuilt into apartments with stores and offices on the first floor, none of which were Knight Industries or any kind of technology company, except a place that sold the new kind of phone that you wave in front of cash registers, and a store that sold marijuana. There were some cops around, but they didn't seem to care, so I guess drugs are fine now.

Nobody I talked to knew where Knight Industries was, or had ever even heard of it. I thought I could use a phone book to look them up, but nobody knew what that was either, except for one guy who told me I could probably find one in a museum. He didn't know where any museums were though.

That's when I had the idea to go to a library to see if that's where they keep phone books, since libraries are basically museums for books. Maybe that's what that guy meant.

The library was a lot of help, even if they didn't have any phone books. The librarian said she remembers them from when she was a kid, but they didn't really exist anymore since everything is on computers now. She told me that I could easily look up Knight Industries on my phone, but since I don't have one of those, she said she would help me look it up on a computer. Then she asked me where I got my hair done.

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According to the computer phone book, Knight Industries doesn't exist anymore. A couple of decades ago, it changed its name to Knight Digital Solutions, sold off all of their industrial patents, and turned into a "research lab at the cutting edge of information." Then ten years later it was bought by a company called MegaTrode that absorbed it into their artificial intelligence division.

When I asked KITT why we had to go to a library to find all this out

when he had a perfectly good computer of his own, he said that wouldn't have worked because all of the information in his computer was from 1986, and that if he had known their current address this whole time, we wouldn't have just spent an afternoon driving around Los Angeles trying to find it. KITT can be really funny sometimes.

It would usually take seven or eight hours to get from Los Angeles to MegaTrode in the Bay Area, but since KITT can go hundreds of miles per hour and is way too fast for any cops to catch, we got there in two. We even managed to lose a couple of helicopters that were trying to chase us down.

To get into MegaTrode corporate headquarters, we had to get past a security gate where a guard said I had to either have an employee ID or be on the list of that day's appointments. When I told him who I was and that even though I didn't have an appointment, I urgently needed to speak to someone, preferably Devon Miles, as soon as possible about Knight Industries, so that I can be sent back to 1986 to complete my mission for the Foundation for Law and Government, instead of letting me past, he got on the phone and called for backup.

I could have used KITT to just plow through the gatehouse like a tank and get in that way, which is what we would normally do, but since we were just looking for help and not chasing bad guys we decided to try a plan that didn't involve destroying property and hurting people.

I told the security guard we were leaving and that there was nothing to worry about. Then we backed up like we were going home, but really we were just giving ourselves plenty of room to accelerate to launch speed, then drove directly at the entrance and jumped over the gate and all the security guards and got onto the MegaTrode campus without plowing into anything.

Once we were in, there wasn't a lot of time to find someone who knew about Knight Industries or the Foundation, so KITT decided to

create a diversion by dropping me off at the main building, and then leading all the security guys on a chase around the campus. That way, I could slip inside and do some investigation without getting noticed.

I went to the main desk and told the receptionist that I needed to immediately speak to anybody that has information about Devon Miles or Knight Industries, and it's an emergency. She said that if I had an appointment, she could send me right up, but otherwise there was nothing she could do besides pass along my request to schedule a meeting in the future. That was obviously not an option, so I told her I was going to go upstairs to find the artificial intelligence division, with or without her help.

Right then a security guard went running past, and the receptionist tried to flag him down but he yelled something about a major situation outside and didn't stop to help. I went to the elevators, and since there was nobody to stop me anyway, the receptionist told me that whoever I was looking for was probably on the fifth floor. I thanked her and promised that she wouldn't regret it.

I didn't know who to talk to when I got up there, so I went into the first office I saw.

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When Knight Industries became a part of MegaTrode, there were only fifteen employees left, and none of them were Devon Miles. According to their corporate archives, there was no evidence of him ever working there, and no sign that the Foundation ever existed either.

The computer scientist whose office I was in was named Dan, and he said he would look up anything in their systems I wanted, as long as I promised I wouldn't hurt him — even though I told him over and over again that I wasn't there to hurt anybody, I was only trying to find somebody who knows about the mission I was sent on in 1986 that ended

with me and my talking car getting laser-blasted forty years into the future. But no matter how hard Dan looked, there didn't seem to be any of the information that I needed in the MegaTrode computer system.

That's when I called KITT with my watch and told him that it looks like we've come to a dead end. He said that the situation outside was starting to get dicey, and that the security team was calling in the local police, and he probably couldn't hold them off much longer without deploying his anti-personnel weapons system.

I didn't think that would be a good idea, since we were here to ask for help, so I asked Dan if there was a back door to the building where I could tell my car to pick me up.

He asked if I meant my talking car. I said yes, I did, but he does a lot more than just talk.

Then Dan asked me what else KITT could do, and it seemed like he was just stalling to give the security guards enough time to catch me. I told him I'd be more than happy to give him a demonstration, as long as he shows me a way out of the building that wouldn't lead me directly into police custody. He made me promise that I would let him go after that, which of course I did because I was only trying to get me and KITT back to 1986.

On our way down the emergency stairwell, I called up KITT and said to meet us by the loading dock out back. He told me he was kind of in the middle of something, but he would try to make time in his busy schedule for my needs. That's KITT, always joking, even in the middle of a serious situation.

We got to the exit just as KITT pulled up and popped open the driver's door so I could jump in for a quick escape because the cops were right around the corner. I said to Dan that if he wanted to see all of KITT's cool moves, it was now or never because we had to get out of there right now, but when I turned to see if he was coming or not, he just stood there

with a stunned look on his face and said, is that really your car?

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The next few weeks after all that were almost like a vacation. The cops and security guards caught us because Dan wouldn't let us leave because he was busy looking inside KITT to see if there was a hidden driver or remote control device, even after KITT explained to him that he was fully autonomous from front to back, and that we were in a hurry.

We didn't have any problem with the police because that's when Dan, who I haven't seen since, waved everybody down and said they didn't have to shoot me, that they could put their guns away, and that all the tactical combat gear was unnecessary, because this was all a big misunderstanding. It was actually a groundbreaking scientific discovery.

I was put in the back of a police car anyway while they figured out what to do. I still had my watch on, so I told KITT we'd hang tight, because MegaTrode might still be our best bet to find Devon and get back to 1986. He said that even if it wasn't, it didn't look like we had much of a choice.

Eventually, the biggest security guard there took me to a conference room in one of the side buildings, and said as long as I cooperate, MegaTrode was going to help me out as much as they could. The first thing I had to do was call KITT with my watch and tell him to let the MegaTrode team take him to their lab for experiments.

KITT didn't want to at first, but the security guard insisted that it was absolutely necessary because MegaTrode needed to confirm who we were, and what kind of technology they were dealing with. That way there's a chance they could still send us back to 1986. Then the security guard took my watch.

I spent the next few days talking to a bunch of scientists, lawyers, and a lot of doctors. They all asked me questions about Knight Industries

and the Foundation for Law and Government, and also about my childhood, family history, and if I ever had a problem with prescription medication. I signed a bunch of documents, but I can't remember what they were about.

They wouldn't let me talk to KITT, and they all said that nobody had ever heard of Devon Miles, but everyone was really nice. They got me a fancy room at the hotel down the street, and by the second week, I didn't have to go in for any more interviews or electroshocks or anything, so I had a lot of time to myself. The president of the company even came by once and said I looked like the kind of guy who would like driving around in a new Corvette, and when I said I was, he tossed me the keys and said it was sitting outside, red, and was mine for as long as I was there. It was really fast, but I still missed KITT a lot.

The place I was staying at was pretty far away from anything fun. Some days I drove into town. Most days I didn't. It was also weird any time I went to a place like a restaurant or bar, because two MegaTrode security guys followed me at all times, which they said was for my own safety.

Any time I went to MegaTrode to check on KITT, he was always in the middle of some system test, or firmware diagnostic, or whatever they were doing. They alway said they were almost done with all the tests, and I could probably take KITT back soon. Nobody had any news about Knight Industries or the time travel laser that sent me to the year 2026, but everyone said they were working on it.

One day I went to the lab and KITT was parked outside. I tried to ask him how he was doing, but he just sat there and didn't say anything. Then a guy who was dressed like the lawyers from before came outside and said that MegaTrode was done with all of the experiments they were doing, and that as of this moment I was free to leave and take KITT with me.

It was a long shot, but before I left, I decided to ask one last time about any update on getting us back to 1986. There wasn't. Then I asked if

there were any job openings at MegaTrode, or any missions they needed me to go on, and the guy said no, not at the moment, but they'd be sure to get in touch if they needed any help in the future.

After that, I had to walk down to the gas station, since they left KITT's tank empty and he wouldn't start. But then once we got back on the road, it was like we'd never been apart.

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KITT couldn't remember too much about what they did to him at MegaTrode. He said they transferred all his data to their mainframe by bypassing his CPU, whatever that means, so he has no way of finding out what information they took or what they want to do with it.

I've noticed that KITT isn't as funny as he used to be. He's trying, but it's like he's trying too hard. I think it's because he was shut down for so long that it's like his personality is rusty, like he's just waking up after a long nap. He's also a lot more forgetful than he used to be. Like sometimes he'll forget something I told him the day before, or he'll ask me where we're going even after he already gave me directions.

He also gets a lot of things wrong that he didn't before. Like when I ask him how to spell a word, a lot of times he gives me answers that I know are wrong. It makes doing crossword puzzles almost impossible.

One thing that I really enjoy is that KITT agrees with me all time now. He used to make fun of most of my ideas, before MegaTrode, but now he usually just goes along with whatever I come up with, and tells me how smart I am. I wish there weren't so many advertisements. I don't remember KITT having those before. It starts to get really annoying after a while, way worse than the radio.

Mostly it's back to old times. KITT is just as fast as he used to be, and he's even less afraid of crashing.

When we left MegaTrode, I still had about $500 left over from what they gave me, but that didn't last too long. It was hard to find a job without a permanent address or legal identity, so KITT and I started going on missions again. It's hard work, and the pay isn't great, but as long as you get to the hardware store parking lot early enough, you can get a good mission to go on almost every day.

An alarm started going off inside KITT yesterday on our way to the taco stand, and KITT announced that my free trial period was coming to an end, and if I wanted to continue using the service, I would have to upgrade to a full subscription before the end of the week.

When I asked him what that's all about, he said it was as simple as entering my credit card information so that I could continue enjoying the KITT driving and lifestyle experience uninterrupted. And also that ad-free plans are not available at this time.

I don't have a credit card, but if I don't get one soon, KITT's going to shut down on me, and then I won't be able to go on missions or go anywhere.

The lady at the library told me that MegaTrode had a new job listing for a janitor, so even though I filled out an application on the computer already, I wanted to come down here in person to remind you who I was and that I kind of worked here before.

Michael Knight. K-N-I-G-H-T.